



COSMIC
AI-POWERED
ENERGY OPTIMISATION

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

COSMIC

2nd OPEN CALL

AI & Data Solutions to Boost the Green Transition

Submission of applications starts: 15 May 2026 at 8:00 Brussels Time

Submission deadline: 15 July 2026 at 17:00 Brussels Time



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1. Basic Info about COSMIC

Welcome to the **COSMIC 2nd Open Call!** This guide provides essential details about the project to ensure you understand our goals and how your participation can contribute to a sustainable future.

COSMIC is a European-funded initiative aligned with the Green Deal objectives. It aims to harness the power of AI and big data for large-scale energy resource optimisation.

With COSMIC, we are building a dynamic ecosystem where large industries, core technical and social science partners, and innovative SMEs, including start-ups, collaborate to create high-impact, scalable solutions:

- **Large industries:** Providing datasets and pilot sites.
- **Core technical partners:** Developing cross-sector solutions.
- **Core social science partners:** Assuring user-centred design of solutions.
- **SMEs:** Bringing specific data/AI-based assets through our Open Calls.
- **Research institutions:** Driving technological advancements.
- **Public authorities & NGOs:** Ensuring societal alignment.

The [COSMIC consortium](#) comprises highly experienced and complementary key players across 10 European countries.

Through two Open Calls, **COSMIC** will select up to **27 SMEs (including start-ups)** to develop, test, and validate AI-based services and solutions tailored to **energy resource optimisation**. The project will develop and offer data/AI-based platforms, solutions, and modules as transversal core infrastructures.

Successful applicants will integrate their solutions into COSMIC's AI-driven platforms and participate in large-scale **pilots across six European countries** (Spain, Belgium, Portugal, France, Ireland, and Finland), ensuring real-world validation and market readiness.

The integration of these core and application-oriented technologies will result in Integrated AI Systems (IAIS) for Key Energy Resource Optimisation Applications capable of scaling up to cover more key applications.

This is **not just a funding opportunity!** We are looking for solutions that align with the project's mission and have the potential for impactful deployment within our industrial ecosystem.

Why apply?

- **Validate your AI-based solutions** in large-scale pilots with industry leaders.



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- **Gain access to diverse datasets** to enhance your technology.
- **Enhance your track record** for AI-powered green transition expertise.
- **Receive tailored technical and business mentoring** to accelerate market adoption.
- **Collaborate with top industrial and research partners** in Europe.
- **Contribute to a more sustainable and energy-efficient future.**

For more details on the project, please visit **our website** at <https://cosmic-horizon.eu/>.

Read the information in this guide carefully to get a full understanding of the Open Call, eligibility criteria, and application process.

Additional support is available through **our Helpdesk** in [the Discord Community](#) and via the **dedicated contact email** for this open call: helpdesk.cosmic@fundingbox.com.

2. What do we offer?

The **COSMIC project** offers a strategic support programme designed to bring **the best data/AI-based innovations** into our energy resource optimisation ecosystem.

We will allocate a total funding of **4.050.000 Euros** to the best proposals emerging from the 2 Open Calls. In total, a maximum of **27 individual projects** will be selected, each receiving a lump sum of up to **150.000 Euros**.

The **2nd Open Call**, with a total budget of **1,914,108.12 Euros**, aims to select up to **13 beneficiaries**.

Our call targets challenges in energy resource optimisation, including but not limited to:

- **Carbon footprint integration:** Combining energy and waste data for environmental insights.
- **Community engagement and reporting:** Delivering personalised analytics and benchmarking for end users and community managers.
- **Optimising the uptake of smart appliances and meters:** Driving consumer research of AI in energy efficiency.
- **Waste sorting assistance:** Utilising computer vision to streamline waste classification.

Selected projects will benefit from our comprehensive **10-month support programme**, structured into four dynamic stages:

1. **Technical mentoring:** Shaping individual mentoring plans and initial Proof-of-Concept definitions.



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2. **Solution development:** Guidance through alpha version testing and iterative improvements.
3. **Pilot testing:** Evaluation of beta solutions within controlled environments and real-world pilots.
4. **Market readiness and exploitation:** Tailored business support and joint sessions to enhance market impact.

The beneficiaries selected under this open call will have the opportunity to collaborate with COSMIC’s Core Technical Facilitators (CTFs) or the Core Social Facilitator (CSF), receiving technological support to integrate their AI- and data-driven solutions. Selected solutions will be validated within the context of COSMIC’s large-scale pilots, allowing for real-world testing in industrial or urban environments. Relevant results will be disseminated through COSMIC’s communication channels, and the developed software, documentation (e.g., datasheets, technical guidelines, tutorials), and other assets may be made available, subject to agreement with the data owners, through COSMIC’s shared repositories, following open access and FAIR data principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) where applicable.

2nd Open Call application details

Online application form	https://opportunities.getonepass.eu/open-opportunities/cosmic-2nd-open-call
Open Call launch date	15 May 2026 at 8:00 Brussels Time
Open Call close date	15 July 2026 at 17:00 Brussels Time
Webinars “How to Apply”	28 May and 11 June 2026
Info Day 2026	12 May 2026
Gantt template	Please complete the GANTT chart for your project using this template and upload it to your application.

This is your opportunity to join a vibrant ecosystem of industry leaders, research institutions, and innovators, contributing to Europe’s sustainable future. Remember, funding is awarded to the proposals that best align with our mission. Quality and impact are paramount!



3. Eligibility Criteria

To participate in the COSMIC programme, you have to meet all the criteria described in this section of the guide, pass our evaluation process, and finally, sign the subgrant agreement with the COSMIC Consortium.

Projects that do not comply with the criteria described in this section will be excluded. We will check the eligibility criteria during the whole evaluation process.

3.1 Who are we looking for?

We are looking for **individual SMEs¹ (including startups)** registered in:

- [The Member States of the European Union²](#) and their Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) or
- Associated Countries (AC) to Horizon Europe³.

The applicants who are subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)⁴ are not eligible to participate in this open call.

We are particularly interested in receiving applications from the following types of applicants:

- **Technology developers:** SMEs with a strong track record in software development, system integration, and innovative IT solutions, particularly those tailored to AI and big data.

¹ An **SME** will be considered as such if it complies with the European Commission's Recommendation 2003/361/EC. As a summary, the criteria defining an SME are:

- Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 250;
- Annual turnover less or equal to €50 million OR annual balance sheet total less or equal to €43 million.

Note that the figures of partners and linked enterprises should also be considered as stated in the SME user guide. For detailed information check EU recommendation:

https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en

² Following the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16th December 2022, no legal commitments can be signed with Hungarian public interest trusts established under Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals. However, in case the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in the COSMIC 2nd open call. In case of consortium, co-applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.

³ **AC as of 24.04.2026:** Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, United Kingdom, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye, Tunisia, Ukraine, for the most up-to-date list please first part of this [document](#).

⁴ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map.



- **AI technology providers:** Companies specialising in machine learning, computer vision, and data analytics capable of developing AI-driven tools to enhance energy resource optimisation.
- **Data analytics and IoT specialists:** SMEs experienced in managing large datasets, building smart data platforms, and integrating IoT systems to produce actionable insights.
- **Environmental technology innovators:** Businesses focused on sustainability, offering solutions related to carbon footprint integration, circular economy practices, and energy efficiency improvements.
- **Waste management and recycling tech SMEs:** Emerging companies working on technologies like computer vision for waste sorting and platforms that encourage community engagement in waste reduction.
- **User insight and behavioural analytics SMEs:** Companies using data-driven methods, such as panel studies, behavioural modelling, or AI-enhanced survey tools, to generate actionable insights on user acceptance, adoption behaviour, and market viability to support the development, calibration, and validation of AI and big data solutions.

The COSMIC partners, their affiliated entities, and their employees or associates-whether current or former, if previously involved in project execution-are not eligible to act as applicants.

Funding Conditions:

- Each applicant must demonstrate the ability to provide **at least 30% of the total project budget** through self-financing.
- The COSMIC project will offer a **lump sum covering up to 70%** of the project budget for third-party beneficiaries (up to **150.000 Euros**).
- **Non-profit legal entities⁵** may be eligible to receive **up to 100% funding**.

3.2 Ideal Project

The ideal project presents a clearly defined, innovative data and AI-based solution tailored to address one of COSMIC's specific challenges in energy resource optimisation.

⁵ non-profit legal entity' means a legal entity which by its legal form is non-profit-making or which has a legal or statutory obligation not to distribute profits to its shareholders or individual members (Article 2(18) of [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/695](#))



Here are some key guidelines for the best-fit proposals:

- **Alignment with COSMIC objectives:**

Your project must demonstrate conceptual alignment with the COSMIC Core Technical Facilitators (CTFs) or Core Social Facilitator (CSF) and address a single specific challenge from the list of challenges. This ensures focused development and testing in large-scale pilots.

- **Technology Readiness Level (TRL)⁶ or Societal Readiness Level (SRL)⁷:**

Proposals must aim to reach a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) between **6 and 7** by the end of the project. This means that your solution should start at **a minimum of TRL 3**, with initial validation at a small scale (typically TRL 3 - 5), and be ready for further testing, refinement, and demonstration through COSMIC's industrial pilots to reach higher maturity (TRL 6 - 7).

- **Solution specificity:**

The proposed asset should be a **data- or AI-driven service, solution, technology, or tool**, or a means of validating such innovations (e.g., through consumer research). It must directly address one of the challenges in the targeted key applications, such as **reducing energy consumption, enhancing industrial efficiency, or supporting sustainable building management**.

For instance, a project could involve developing an AI-powered digital twin that optimises energy use in multi-storey buildings by integrating real-time data with advanced analytics.

Applicants are expected to submit assets or services that **either constitute or contribute to** data- and AI-based solutions aligned with the **Core Technical Facilitators (CTFs)** or **Core Social Facilitator (CSF)** defined by the COSMIC project. These contributions should support the implementation of the **Green Deal Key Applications** within the COSMIC project framework.

- **Scalability and impact:**

Emphasise the scalability of your solution and its potential to generate significant environmental and operational benefits across the targeted sectors. Ensure that the solution is designed to integrate with one or more large-scale pilots within the COSMIC framework.

By focusing on these elements, your project will be well-positioned to contribute meaningfully to the green transition and the overarching objectives of the COSMIC initiative.

⁶ Technology Readiness Level (TRL) – A scale from 1 to 9 to assess the maturity of a technology, from initial concept (TRL 1) to a proven system in operational use (TRL 9).

⁷ Societal Readiness Level (SRL) - the level of public acceptability of a technology, product, process, or intervention. It is based on the premise that all innovation, whether technical or social, must be integrated into the societal environment. As a result, the higher the SRL, the greater the level of integration.



Here are two concrete examples demonstrating these principles in action:

Example 1: Port Energy Flow Digital Twin

- **Alignment with COSMIC objectives**
 - **Target Challenge:** Challenge 22: Port Power Digital Twin1
 - Alignment with 7.1. Sizing an Energy-Storage System for OPS (Pilot by Port Authority of Balearic Islands, Spain), as it's proposed a Real-time electrical network state representation.
- **TRL:** Starts at **TRL 3-5** (validated digital twin prototype using Port of Palma simulation data) and attains **TRL 7** when the system prototype is fully demonstrated and tested in the replication simulation environment.
- **Solution Specificity**
 - Develop a real-time Digital Twin (DT) for the fragmented port electrical grid (MT/BT infrastructure).
 - Heterogeneous Data Ingestion Module for non-standard sources (meters, SCADA, IoT API), requiring no new hardware deployment.
 - Governed Multi-User Access Layer: APB retains validation authority over shared data, while concessionaires can visualize their own energy data.
 - Well-defined interface for the EMS, exposing real-time state and network capacity limits per branch, transformer substation, and DSO connection point.
 - Basic reporting layer including generation/consumption data per concessionaire, incentives calculated by the EMS, CO2e emissions, and fault notifications for APB operators.
- **Scalability & Impact**
 - The validated Digital Twin architecture is replicable across a large share of European ports managing private distribution networks.
 - The open and modular integration approach is transferable to other port or industrial microgrid contexts, expanding commercial applicability.
 - Contributes to port decarbonisation by providing the necessary network visibility to enable reliable active energy management (demand response, PV integration, BESS dispatch).
- **Collaboration & Deliverables**
 - Mentoring Kick-Off: Co-define the EMS interface specification and data ingestion protocols with APB
 - Stage 1: Implement heterogeneous data ingestion logic and initial integration with CTF 3.1
 - Stage 2: Develop and validate the real-time network model (DT) using provided APB topology and Port of Palma simulation data (hourly granularity).
 - Stage 3: Develop the multi-user access layer and the EMS interface, testing role-based access enforcement and capacity limit exposure in the simulation environment.1



- *Final Review: Deliver the fully tested DT software (architecture designed to scale to real-time operation), a replication guide for other ports, and data accuracy conformance tests validated against ground-truth measurements provided by APB.*

Example 2: Geo-AI-Driven DHC Network Optimizer

- **Alignment with COSMIC objectives**
 - **Target Challenge:** Challenge 25: Geo-AI-Driven Optimization of DHC Networks,
 - **Alignment with Pilot 3.2:** Housing buildings (planned district in Jambes (Wallonia), Belgium)
 - **Foreseen integration with CTF 7:** (VPPOPT, a sizing tool of multi-energy communities, managed by Cenaero).
- **TRL**

Starts at TRL 3-5 (validated workflow prototype using synthetic and Wallonia geoportal data) and attains TRL 7 when the Geo-AI optimization workflow is fully demonstrated and tested in the Pilot 3.2 simulation environment.
- **Solution Specificity**
 - *Develop an automated Geo-AI workflow to generate and optimize District Heating and Cooling (DHC) networks that minimize total network length.*
 - **Geo-AI Optimization Engine:** *Considers multi-layer spatial data, including land usage, ground composition, and existing infrastructure constraints.*
 - **Scenario Evaluation Module:** *Automatically evaluates three relevant DHC network scenarios per district against a Minimum Spanning Tree (MST) baseline.*
 - **Output Generator:** *Produces GeoJSON outputs with building footprints and optimal network layouts, fully compatible with simulation tools and QGIS for interactive refinement.*
- **Scalability & Impact**

Enables automated, interoperable workflows that significantly reduce manual GIS processing time (target reduction $\geq 50\%$).

 - *Supports informed, sustainability-oriented planning decisions by allowing transparent comparison of network designs.*
 - *The methodology is replicable for early-stage DHC network planning across diverse European regions.*
 - *Provides opportunities to offer backend analytics or visualization services for planning platforms.*
- **Collaboration & Deliverables**
 - **Mentoring Kick-Off:** *Co-define input data structure (from 3D digital twin/BEM and Wallonia geoportal) and output GeoJSON specification with Cenaero/CTF7.*
 - **Stage 1:** *Implement data ingestion logic and establish the Minimum Spanning Tree (MST) baseline for network length comparison.*
 - **Stage 2:** *Develop and validate the Geo-AI optimization engine, ensuring minimization of total network length (target $\leq 10\%$ above MST baseline) and 100% selected building coverage.*



- **Stage 3:** *Develop the Scenario Evaluation Module, ensuring clear ranking and interactive adjustment capabilities for the three scenarios.*
- **Final Review:** *Deliver the fully tested automated workflow software, a replication guide, and conformance tests demonstrating GeoJSON compatibility.*

3.3 What types of activities can be funded?

The activities eligible for financial support must align with the COSMIC project's objectives, aiming to optimise large-scale resource management and support the transition to a net-zero society.

Eligible activities include the development, facilitation, testing, and validation of innovative data/AI-based assets or services that directly support key energy resource optimisation applications.

Each proposal must focus on **one specific prioritised challenge** as outlined in the **Technical Guidelines**. Proposals addressing multiple challenges within a single application will not be considered. However, applicants may submit separate proposals if they wish to address more than one challenge. In cases where multiple proposals from the same applicant receive high scores, the COSMIC partners will select the one that best fits the project's overall objectives and ensures a balanced mix of solutions across challenges.

The proposed activities should ideally include:

- **Solution development:** Crafting innovative AI and data-based services, tools, and technologies (e.g., digital twins, smart charging systems, and user interfaces) that directly address a specific COSMIC challenge.
- **Integration and facilitation:** Merging new solutions with existing platforms - such as BMS, BIM/GIS-based digital twins or Home Energy Management Systems (HEMS) - to enhance data flow and system interoperability.
- **Testing and validation:** Rigorously evaluating the proposed solutions in large-scale pilot environments to verify their performance, scalability, and user acceptance.
- **Proof-of-concept and demonstration projects:** Delivering demonstrative projects that highlight the practical impact and industrial applicability of the developed assets.
- **Resource utilisation assessment:** Assess and track the resources, especially electricity, used in the process of delivering the service or developing the solution and estimate the operational resource consumption.

These solutions will be tested within one or more large-scale pilots, as defined in the challenge description in the **Technical Guidelines**.



Projects should demonstrate a clear European dimension, contributing to a substantial positive impact on European citizens, in terms of:

- **Scalability and business model**
 - Clear go-to-market and scaling plan across EU regions.
 - Sustainable exploitation beyond project end (licensing, services, open source).
- **Replicability**
 - Solution design allows roll-out in diverse EU regions (urban/rural; north/south).
 - Adaptability to different regulatory or cultural contexts across member states.

Applicants are expected to show how their proposed solutions will deliver **tangible, measurable benefits for European citizens, industries, and ecosystems**, supporting Europe's transition toward a **climate-neutral, sustainable, and digitally empowered future**. When preparing your application, clearly indicate how your solution contributes to one or more of the following **EU Green Deal priority areas**:

- **Achieving climate neutrality** – Reduction of energy consumption.
- **Transition to clean and renewable energy sources** – Improving industry efficiency; enhancing building efficiency; increasing the resilience of public open spaces and infrastructure materials in response to climate-change-related weather events; implementing renewable energy sources.
- **Advancing a circular economy** – Promoting resource efficiency; supporting circular business models.
- **Promoting sustainable and smart transport** – Contributing to a sustainable and smart mobility strategy.
- **Transition to a fair, socially inclusive economy** – Supporting social inclusion and ensuring a fair transition.

3.4 Ground rules

- **Be on time and use our system:** only proposals submitted through the **online form** before the deadline of **July 15th , 2026, at 17:00 Brussels time** will be evaluated and considered for funding. If you submit the form correctly, the system will send you a confirmation of your submission. Get in touch with us if it is not the case.
- **English language:** your proposal must be written in English in all mandatory parts to be eligible. Only parts written in English will be evaluated. If the mandatory parts of the proposal are in any other language, the entire proposal will be rejected. If only



non-mandatory parts of a proposal are submitted in a language different from English, those parts will not be evaluated, but the proposal is still eligible.

- **Every question deserves your attention:** all mandatory sections - generally marked with an asterisk - of your proposal must be completed. The data provided should be up to date, true, and complete, and should allow assessment of the proposal. Additional material, not specifically requested in the online application form, will not be considered for the evaluation.
- **Be exhaustive:** You have to verify the completeness of the form, as it won't be possible to add any further information after the deadline. After the proposal is submitted, you will be able to modify the form until the deadline.
- **Conflicts of interest:** we will take into consideration the existence of a potential **conflict of interest** between you and one or more Consortium partners. Consortium partners, their affiliated entities, employees, or persons treated as personnel (ex., working under a B2B contract) cannot take part in the COSMIC programme. All cases of potential conflict of interest will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- **Healthy finances and a clean sheet are a must:** we don't accept entities that are under liquidation or are an enterprise under difficulty⁸ according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18, or that are excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of either national or EU authority. We also don't accept entities that are meeting national regulations regarding bankruptcy.
- **It is *your* proposal:** your project should be based on your original work, or your right to use the IPR must be clear. Any work related to the implementation of the project described in the application may not violate the IPR of third parties, and the IPR of the application project may not be the subject of a dispute or proceedings for infringement of third-party IPR.

⁸ An enterprise will be considered an undertaking in difficulty if more than half of the capital has disappeared. This refers to the loss of "subscribed share capital". If profit and loss reserves deficit more than 50% of share capital, there is a potential problem with the company. (Article 2, item 18 point a) and b)

(a) In the case of a limited liability company (other than an SME that has been in existence for less than three years [...]), where more than half of its subscribed share capital has disappeared as a result of accumulated losses. This is the case when deduction of accumulated losses from reserves (and all other elements generally considered as part of the own funds of the company) leads to a negative cumulative amount that exceeds half of the subscribed share capital. For the purposes of this provision, 'limited liability company' refers in particular to the types of company mentioned in Annex I of Directive 2013/34/EU (1) and 'share capital' includes, where relevant, any share premium.

(b) In the case of a company where at least some members have unlimited liability for the debt of the company (other than an SME that has been in existence for less than three years [...]), where more than half of its capital as shown in the company accounts has disappeared as a result of accumulated losses. For the purposes of this provision, 'a company where at least some members have unlimited liability for the debt of the company' refers in particular to the types of company mentioned in Annex II of Directive 2013/34/EU.

Please note that, if your SME exists from less than three years, you won't be considered as undertaking in difficulties.



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- **Use AI only as a tool.** The use of AI tools to improve clarity and structure is permitted, provided the content remains accurate and fact-based. Applications may be rejected if found to be AI-generated and lacking a factual foundation. All submissions must be authentic reflections of the project, and the applicant team must evidence the technical and operational capacity required for implementation. Providing unverifiable or non-authentic information is grounds for immediate rejection.
- **Submission and modification of the applications:** It will not be possible to update any information or modify your proposal application after the deadline. The only exception is if a mistake has been made in the key administrative data (e.g., contact mail or phone, name of the company, etc.). In this case, the applicants have to contact us by email, indicating the proposal ID, their username, and the data that should be corrected.
- You can submit up to **three proposals – one per challenge** – but please note that **only one of your submitted proposals will be selected for funding**. Multiple submissions to the same challenge are **not allowed**. If more than one proposal is submitted to the same challenge, **only the most recent one** will be evaluated.
- **Acceptance of the open call rules:** To apply for this open call, you have to accept its rules and regulations, detailed in this guide for applicants.
- **Limitations:** the beneficiaries of the 1st COSMIC support programme cannot participate in the 2nd Open Call.

COSMIC organised an **Info Day** on May 12th and is planning **two 'How to Apply' webinars** on May 28th and June 11th as part of this open call. They will be announced at the [Project Website](#) and in the [COSMIC Community](#).

If you need extra hints on how to prepare your application, check out the section: [Extra Hints](#) to submit your proposal

4. How will we evaluate your proposal?

Our evaluation process is transparent, fair, and equal to all our participants, with a clearly defined complaint procedure (see section [Complaints](#)). We will evaluate your project in **five phases**.

For this call, we are looking for the best fit for our project, and we anticipate a high volume of applications. Since our primary concern is quality over quantity, we encourage you to put in the effort to present your project in the best possible way, offering as much detail as you can. This



will assist us in evaluating your application and identifying how your proposal aligns with the overall scope of COSMIC.

4.1 First Check

After the closure of the open call, we will review the proposal to ensure it meets the conditions outlined in [Section 3](#). This assessment will be based on the statements provided in your proposal.

At this stage, the eligibility criteria are checked against the Declaration of Honour or self-declarations included in the application form, and they will be continuously verified throughout the evaluation process, including the final formal check.

Projects that do not comply with the above-mentioned criteria will be rejected. As a result of the checking, a 'List of eligible applications' will be produced.

We will inform the rejected applicants about the results of the admissibility and eligibility check phase.

4.2 In/Out Scope Screening

The Selection Committee in COSMIC, composed of technical partners, social partners, and experts, will be responsible for this stage of the in/out evaluation.

To maximise the impact within the framework of COSMIC, your proposal must be aligned with the scope of activities outlined in [Section 3.2](#) and [Section 3.3](#) and provide a clear demonstration of this alignment.

At this stage, your proposal will be reviewed on the following aspects:

- **Scope.** The objectives of the proposal must fit within the scope of the COSMIC project.
- **European Dimension.** The project should have a European dimension as described in [section 3.3](#) of this Guide for Applicants.

To ensure a high degree of alignment with the **COSMIC scope**, each proposal must target a **single specific challenge** and demonstrate a clear synergy with the **pilots** where the solution will be implemented and validated.

Your solution should be **data- or AI-driven** and must start at a **Technology Readiness Level (TRL)** appropriate for the targeted challenge.



Furthermore, the proposed work plan must encompass **eligible activities**, such as solution development, integration, facilitating interoperability, and delivering a Proof-of-Concept, all culminating in rigorous **pilot testing** within the COSMIC framework.

Projects must demonstrate a clear **European dimension**, characterized by strong **replicability and scaling potential** across diverse EU regions and socio-economic contexts. Proposals should also explicitly link to **EU Green Deal priority areas**, including energy efficiency improvements, advancing the circular economy, promoting smart mobility, and supporting a fair and inclusive transition.

The Selection Committee members will assess if your proposal matches the criteria mentioned above, following a “Yes/No” approach. They will justify their assessment in case of rejection of the proposal.

We will inform all the eligible applicants about the results of In/Out Scope Screening, generating an ‘In Scope List’. Be aware that proposals that do not comply with any of the aspects described above will be rejected. The ones complying with all of them will move on to the experts’ independent individual evaluation phase.

4.3 External Evaluation

In this phase, each project will be evaluated by **two evaluators** from the pool of external experts or the Consortium partners.

Your project will be evaluated within the following awarding criteria:

(1). **EXCELLENCE** will evaluate:

- **Ambition.** The applicants have to demonstrate to what extent the proposed third-party project contributes to the **project scope**, the project has a **European dimension**, and is beyond the **State of the Art**. The third-party project has to describe the innovative approach behind it (e.g., ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches, new products, services, or business and organisational models). *The contribution to the EU’s Open Science Policy, as a way of sharing and reusing data, tools, and services, to deliver better European services that benefit society, will be considered when evaluating the proposals.*
- **Innovation:** applicants should provide information about the level of innovation within their market and about the degree of **differentiation** that this project will bring.
- **Soundness of the approach and credibility** of the proposed methodology.

(2). **IMPACT** will analyse:



- **Market opportunity:** The applicants have to demonstrate a clear idea of what they want to do and whether the new/improved product has market potential, e.g., because it solves a problem for a specific target customer.
- **Competition:** The applicants have to provide information about the degree of competition for their particular product/service, and if the idea is disruptive and breaks the market. i.e., the products/services to be brought to market can be differentiated from the competition.
- **Commercial Strategy and scalability:** The applicants have to demonstrate the level of scalability of the new/improved product, meaning by not addressing a specific problem but being able to be commercialised to solve a structural problem in a specific sector/process/etc.
- **Environmental and social impact:** The applicants have to demonstrate the project's contribution towards environmental, social, and economic impacts to contribute to sustainable development, the Green Deal, and other European policies. This includes the collection and delivery of relevant data, such as energy used during development and implementation.

(3). IMPLEMENTATION will consider:

- **Team:** The applicants have to demonstrate their management and leadership qualities, their ability to take a concept from ideas to market, their capacity to carry through their ideas, and their understanding of the dynamics of the market they are trying to tap into. The team should be cross-functional, with a strong background and skills base, and take into account its gender balance.
- **Resources:** Demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of the resources assigned to achieve the objectives/work plan/deliverables proposed. *In the case of for-profit entities, the commitment to 30% self-financing of activities should be secured by each for-profit entity.*

The evaluators will score each award criterion on a scale from 0 to 5:

- 0 = Proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information
- 1 = Poor – criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses
- 2 = Fair – proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses
- 3 = Good – proposal addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present
- 4 = Very good – proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
- 5 = Excellent – proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.



Each evaluator will produce an Individual Evaluation Report. Once the Individual Evaluation Reports are submitted, **the final score for each criterion** will be calculated as the average of the scores provided by each evaluator. The **final score of each application** will be calculated as the sum of the scores for each criterion.

The threshold for individual criteria will be 3. The overall threshold, applied to the sum of the three individual scores, is 10 points.

Experts who have evaluated the proposals might join a Consensus Group, which will specifically discuss the cases where there is a significant divergence between the evaluators' scoring. In case no consensus is reached between the evaluators, an additional evaluator will be included to provide an extra evaluation.

Ties will be solved using the following criteria, listed in order of priority:

- The highest score in the Impact Section.
- Gender balance among the personnel responsible for carrying out the activities.
- Other factors related to the objectives of the call (to be determined by the Selection Committee).

All proposals that reach the threshold or are scored above the threshold will pass to the next phase. Please note that we need time to process all the proposals in this phase, so you probably will not hear back for a while. In particular, be aware that the evaluation reports of all proposals reaching this phase will not be communicated until the selection process is completed.

4.4 Consensus Meeting

The 'Selection Committee' - including 2 external experts who participate in the independent evaluation will decide, at this stage, the 'List of Jury Day's participants' to be invited to the Jury Day.

The discussion will be based on the ranking obtained from the external evaluation.

Bear in mind that even if it is normally the best-marked proposals that are selected for funding, the Selection Committee may have fair reasons for objecting or prioritising the selection of a specific candidate. These reasons can relate to:

- The alignment with COSMIC goals and scope.
- The ability to achieve the strongest possible impact.
- Commercial competition.
- The existence of significant ethical concerns.



- The existence of a potential conflict of interest⁹.

The exact number of proposals approved will be decided based on the overall **quality** of the proposals. In case the number of proposals approved is lower than expected, 'Selection Committee' may decide either to select a lower number of beneficiaries, in this particular open call, or to extend the selection process by inviting applicants (over the threshold) from the next places on the ranking list, obtained as a result of external evaluation, and organise an 'additional online pitching session' i.e. a simplified version of a Jury Day.

4.5 Jury Day

If your proposal has been selected following the Consensus Meeting, you will be invited to the Jury Day, where you will have the opportunity to pitch your project in front of the COSMIC Jury, composed of the Selection Committee.

After the Jury Day, the COSMIC Selection Committee will undertake the final evaluation, taking into account the following awarding criteria:

- High potential impact on the project's goals
- Vision and attitude of the team
- Positive impact on the applicant's processes

The Selection Committee will decide by consensus (minimum $\frac{2}{3}$ of majority votes) the 'Provisional List of FSTP recipients' and 'Reserve List'.

The exact number of proposals approved will be decided based on the overall quality of the proposals.

After the Jury Day, we will communicate the results to the applicants.

4.6 Formal Check, Sub-grant Agreement Preparation and Signature

Before you get started with the COSMIC programme, you need to sign the Sub-grant Agreement with the COSMIC Consortium.

Before signing the Agreement, you should provide documents regarding your formal status. The COSMIC Consortium will verify them to prove your eligibility.

To confirm your formal status, we may ask you for (not an exhaustive list): the company's registration document, the legal representation (optionally POA), tax ID number; ownership

⁹ Please note that this is not a closed list of reasons.



structure¹⁰, financial statements, document/s confirming the staff headcount, Bank Identification form, and other documents in case of doubts raised during the checks.

Be extremely vigilant to:

1. **The nature of the documents** we request.

If the documents you provide us with do not prove your eligibility, your participation will end here.

2. **The deadlines** that we will give you to hand us these documents.

If you do not deliver the requested documents on time, without a clear and reasonable justification, we will have to exclude you from further formal assessment. Another applicant from the Reserve list will then replace you.

Please be aware that your proposal/proposal will also undergo an ethical review (if applicable).

5. Our Support Programme and Payment Arrangements

Once your eligibility has been confirmed following the formal check and the Sub-grant Agreement signed, you will become an official beneficiary of the COSMIC programme. As a selected grantee, you will receive a **fixed lump sum of up to 150.000 €**.

The lump sum is a simplified method of settling expenses in projects financed from Horizon Europe Programme funds. It means that the grantee is not required to present strictly defined accounting documents to prove the cost incurred (e.g., invoices) but is obliged to demonstrate that the implementation of the project is in line with the milestones set for it. Simply speaking, it means that we will carefully assess your progress and the quality of your work during interim reviews. The milestones (deliverables, KPIs, and ethical recommendations) will be fixed in the 'Individual Mentoring Plan' elaborated at the beginning of the programme.

The lump sum method does not exempt you from collecting documentation to confirm the costs under fiscal regulations.

Grant will be paid in the following scheme¹¹:

¹⁰ If the ownership structure is not clear from the registration documents, additional documents confirming the ownership structure, e.g. statute, company deed, founding act, share register, in a joint-stock company - list of the company's shareholders; etc, may be requested.

¹¹ Stages might be slightly adapted for non-tech developments.



Stage	Deliverable	Duration	AMOUNT	% Total grant
Stage 1: Individual Mentoring Plan & Proof of Concept	IMP & PoC	1 month	up to 15.000 €	10%
Stage 2: Innovative Solution Development	Solution version Alpha	3 months	up to 60.000 €	40%
Stage 3: Solution Testing and Validation	Solution Testing Report	3 months	up to 45.000 €	30%
Stage 4: Business Support	Exploitation Plan	3 months	up to 30.000 €	20%
Total		10 months	up to 150.000 €	100%

Payment of the given tranche depends on the proper and timely execution of the work planned in the **‘Individual Mentoring Plan’**. The Selection Committee will evaluate your progress regularly.

The evaluation of the third-party projects’ performance at the Milestone Review will be done by the Technical Partners and Ethics Experts (in the case of third-party projects where specific requirements on ethics have been included as deliverables in the Individual Mentoring Plan).

The **evaluation** will be done based on the following criteria:

- Deliverables’ quality (Weight 30%)
- Technical performance indicators (Weight 60%)
- Deadline compliance (Weight 10%)

Each criterion will be scored from 0 to 10, and based on the weight of each criterion, the final score will be calculated. The Selection Committee will review and validate the evaluations, paying special attention to the ‘under threshold’ cases, if any, by taking into consideration all possible objective reasons for underperformance (i.e., external factors which might have influenced the beneficiaries’ performance). The ‘Selection Committee’ will make the final decision and approve the payments or invite third-party projects that have not reached the threshold to leave the programme.



A delayed payment mechanism will be applied to all payments. **20%** of the total grant amount awarded to each Subgrantee will be paid to the beneficiaries once the entire COSMIC Project is completed. This payment should occur approximately 9 months after the project's conclusion. The expected end date of the COSMIC Project is November 30, 2027. Relevant provisions will be included in the Sub-grant Agreements. Please bear in mind that the COSMIC project may be extended.

For more details, check section 5 of [the SGA template](#).

6. Contact us

How can we help you?

If you have any questions regarding our application process, feel free to post your questions on the [Discord Community](#) or email us at helpdesk.cosmic@fundingbox.com.

Responses to any questions are provided on an individual basis, do not constitute a change to this guide for applicants, and are provided for informational purposes.

In case of any technical issues or problems, please include the following information in your message:

- your username, phone number, and email address;
- details of the specific problem (e.g., error messages you encountered, bug description, i.e., if a dropdown list isn't working, etc.); and
- screenshots of the problem.

Complaints

If you believe that a mistake has been made after receiving the results of one of the evaluation phases (when foreseen), you may submit a complaint. To do so, please email us your complaint in English at helpdesk.cosmic@fundingbox.com and include the following information:

- our contact details (including email address);
- the subject of the complaint;
- information and evidence regarding the alleged breach.



Please note that we will review only complaints related to:

- errors in the process caused by our staff,
- technical issues beyond the applicant's control,
- clear human or mechanical errors made by our staff,
- incorrectly marked statements, minor clerical errors, and obvious typographical mistakes.

Please note that we will not review complaints related to the content of the expert evaluations.

Complaints will be reviewed within seven (7) calendar days. If more time is needed, we will inform you via email. Anonymous complaints or those with incomplete information will not be considered.

7. Last but not least - final provisions

Any matters not covered by this guide will be governed by Polish law and rules related to the Horizon Europe Programme and general rules of EU grants.

Please take into account that we make our best effort to keep all provided data confidential; however, for the avoidance of doubt, you are solely responsible for indicating your confidential or sensitive information as such.

Your IPR will remain your property.

For the selected grantees, the sub-grant agreement will include a set of obligations towards the European Commission (for example: promoting the project and giving visibility to the EU funding, maintaining confidentiality, understanding potential controls by the EC/ECA, EPPO, and OLAF).

The COSMIC Consortium might cancel the call at any time, change its provisions, or extend it. In such a case, we will inform all applicants about such a change. The signature of the sub-grant agreement is an initial condition to establish any obligations among applicants and any Consortium partners (concerning the obligation of confidentiality of the application).

Did not find what you were looking for? [Contact us](#) and we will happily answer all your questions.



8. Extra hints before you submit your proposal

A proposal takes time and effort, and we know it. Here are a few crucial points you should read before submitting your proposal.

- Is your project in line with what COSMIC is looking for? You are not sure? You can consult this [section](#) and this [one](#).
- Did you present your project in a way that will convince evaluators? Not sure if you did? Go back to this [section](#).
- Is your project fulfilling all eligibility requirements described in the guide? Check this [section](#) again.
- Are you sure you can cope with our process of the sub-grant agreement signature and payment arrangements for selected proposals? You may want to go over this [section](#)
- Did you check our sub-grant agreement template? You did not? [Check it here](#).

Do you need extra help? [Contact us](#)

Good luck!



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MEET THE CONSORTIUM

